

Questions for the Record
Congressman Darrell Issa
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe
Hearing: The Future of Nagorno-Karabakh
November 15, 2023
Questions for the Honorable James O'Brien
Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State

Sanctions

1. During the hearing, you testified that the Administration is committed to using sanctions if other means fail. Following up on that, has the Treasury Department developed a target list of entities that could be sanctioned if Azerbaijan escalates?
 - If yes, to what extent does this include assets owned or controlled by President Aliiev?

Illegally Detained Armenian Prisoners

2. Right now, Azerbaijan is illegally detaining numerous Armenian prisoners of war captured during and since the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Besides public statements, what meaningful steps is the Administration taking to ensure that these prisoners are treated in accord with the Geneva Conventions and that they are released?
3. Since the renewed assault on Nagorno-Karabakh in September, Azerbaijan has also illegally detained Nagorno-Karabakh's *de facto* political leadership. What is the Administration doing to secure their release?

Azerbaijan's Territorial Aggression in Southern Armenia

4. President Aliyev and his subordinates have a history of statements about conquering of Armenia territory, outside of Nagorno-Karabakh. For instance, President Aliyev has said that he would establish a so-called Zangezur Corridor in Southern Armenia "whether Armenia likes it or not."
 - In fact, Aliyev's troops are currently occupying parts of southern Armenia. Does the Biden Administration acknowledge Azerbaijan's ongoing military occupation of Armenian territory and the ongoing threat of renewed aggression?
 - Canada recently announced it is joining the European Union's Monitoring Mission in Armenia (EUMA), which patrols the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. This would make Canada the first non-EU member state to do so. Is the Administration prepared to also join the EU's monitoring mission to make good on its commitment to Armenian sovereignty and to act as an additional deterrent against Azerbaijani military aggression?
 - France recently announced it was opening a consulate in the southern Armenian region of Syunik as a demonstration of its tangible commitment to Armenia's security. Would the Administration support establishing a consular presence in the region to support security in this vulnerable region and assist Armenian refugees in the region?

Ethnic Cleansing

5. It is in America's strategic interest – as well as stated American policy – to deny authoritarian regimes the legitimacy they seek to engage in aggression against their neighbors or their own population. This concern was at the forefront when Ambassador Yuri Kim, before the Senate

Foreign Relations Committee on September 14, categorically stated that “the United States will not countenance any action or effort—short-term or long-term—to ethnically cleanse or commit other atrocities against the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh.” Yet this is precisely what happened. How is the Administration going to remedy these actions by Azerbaijan, and what is the Administration’s plan of action in holding Baku accountable for brutal actions?

6. Given the despotic nature of the Aliyev regime, what is the Administration doing to ensure Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh have a right to return to their homes and live safely and freely without fear, oppression, and human rights violations by the government of Azerbaijan?
7. Thousands of Armenian cultural and religious monuments dot Nagorno-Karabakh. The 2023 Annual Report of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom noted the documented destruction of Armenian heritage sites in Nagorno-Karabakh, including St. Sargis Church. In addition, in March 2023 the European Parliament condemned Azerbaijani policy to “erase and deny Armenian cultural heritage in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.” Given that Azerbaijan has a long track record of destroying Armenian cultural and religious sites, what is the Administration doing to prevent Azerbaijan from committing erasing Nagorno-Karabakh Armenian cultural heritage?

Azerbaijan’s Ties to our Adversaries

8. Please describe the depth of Azerbaijan’s political, economic, and military relationship with Russia, and how this hinders America’s strategic interests in the region?
9. Credible intelligence reveals close cooperation between Azerbaijan and Russia green-lighted the Sept. 19 military attacks, which ethnically cleansed Nagorno-Karabakh of Armenians for the first time in more than 2,000 years. Please describe the level of collaboration between Russia and Azerbaijan prior to the Sept. 19 military attacks?
10. Sanctioned Russian and Iranian companies own significant shares in Azerbaijan’s gas fields that export energy to Europe, and Azerbaijan has recently signed lucrative energy deals with both countries. Is this administration aware of the extent of Azerbaijan’s energy ties with Russia and Iran, and does it believe this behavior is consistent with our regional interests?

Building Political Ties with Armenia

11. Armenia has made a strong westward pivot to forge closer political, economic, and security ties with Europe and the U.S. and reject subjugation by Russia. Further, it is in the interests of the United States to support Armenia’s democracy and territorial integrity in a region dominated by autocratic and despotic regimes. Please explain what the administration is doing to support Armenia’s westward pivot away from Russia?
12. In recent years, especially in the aftermath of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war and the complete failure of the so-called ‘Russian peacekeepers’ to protect Nagorno-Karabakh, the popularity of Russia amongst the Armenian population has declined significantly. As a result,

there has been a significant proliferation of pro-Western political parties in Armenia, the largest being the National Democratic Alliance of Armenia (NDA).

- Can you clarify what the Administration's official policy is towards pro-Western political opposition parties in Armenia, such as NDA?
- What role do you see pro-Western political parties playing in helping Armenia move towards the West?